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Patterson energy assistance bill will help low income citizens

LANSING – Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton, has introduced legislation to increase the assistance available to low income citizens all over Michigan.

Under present regulations, only Detroit Edison's customers are supporting, from their monthly bills, virtually the entire statewide cost of the Low Income Energy Efficiency Fund. This means that DTE customers in Canton or Brownstown are funding the assistance given to low income residents of Muskegon or Petoskey. Some other utilities collect modest, but uncertain, amounts through voluntary donations.

Michigan will get a more equitable and stable method of sustaining home energy for low income citizens if Senate Bill 334 is passed. The bill was sponsored by Patterson and co-sponsors are from both sides of the aisle.

Several strong letters of support from community service organizations have come in.

"Senate Bill 334 goes a long way to further protect Michigan's most disadvantaged – oftentimes low-income inner city residents and senior citizens on fixed incomes," said Ruth A. Sebaly, president of The Information Center of Taylor, a Family Resource Place. "For so many disadvantaged residents, paying bills to keep their lights on and their homes warm is a real problem. This bill is evidence of true bi-partisanship that addresses a serious need."

Mr. Bill Knox of AARP also applauded Patterson for his bill.

Representatives from several service organizations testified of the enormous need before the Committee. Energy efficiency also is an aim, and winterization of homes of low income families is a priority in the legislation.

The measure was reported with recommendation, and strong bi-partisan support, by the Senate Technology and Energy Committee, and is now pending before the Senate. It is expected to come to the floor next week, after Memorial Day.

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